Support to Textile Research Associations

3803. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to support the Textile Research Associations (TRAs) in the country by infusing additional funds to strengthen research activities;

(b) if so, what would be the tune of additional infusion of funds and which TRAs will receive the funds;

(c) in which areas of textile research these funds are expected to be utilized;

(d) whether the textile research bodies would aim to promote technical textiles; and

(e) in which way the proposed initiative would pave the way to enhance our textile exports to developed countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) to (c) Government has been providing financial support to the TRAs on two counts:—(i) to meet their recurring expenditure; (ii) to undertake R&D Projects. Since industrial research is viewed today as a commercial operation to be justified solely by the usefulness of the results to the industry, the policy of the Government is to encourage TRAs to focus on industry needs, commercialize their activities, strengthen their financial base through effective partnership with industry. Government of India will support generic research projects. The industry participation will be sought in the selection and monitoring of all research projects sponsored by the Government. The thrust areas for R&D that are identified for focus include:—

i. Decentralized sector including Handlooms

ii. Product Development

iii. Cost reduction in the entire manufacturing chain including in utilities conservation.-

iv. Eco-friendly technologies

v. Development of technical textiles including test methods and test equipments

vi. Application of information technology vii. Application of biotechnology viii. R&D in knitting and garment technology ix. Application of nanotechnology and Plasma Science

(d) The textile research bodies are free to decide the area of their research.

(e) In a competitive market, research and development, innovation and cost-effectiveness are necessary for success. These ultimately enhance exports from the country.

Coverage of weavers under Health Insurance Schemes

3804. SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have proposed to increase the coverage of health insurance to two lakh weavers engaged in handloom sector, at a recurring cost of Rs. 30 crore per year;

(b) how many weavers have been included under the scheme so far; and

(c) how much money has been spent so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) In pursuance to budget announcement of 2005-06, a Health Insurance Scheme for handloom weavers was introduced in 2005-06. Budget allocation for the Health Insurance Scheme has been enhanced to Rs. 115.00 Crore for the year 2007-08 which will benefit more than 12 lakh weaver families.

(b) From November, 2005 to March, 2007, 698685 weavers have been covered (both new and renewal cases) under the scheme.

(c) During the period 2005-06 and 2006-07, a sum of Rs. 63.73 Crore has been released to the ICICI Lombard towards Central Government Share of Premium for coverage of handloom weavers under the Health Insurance Scheme.